MUNDA

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2016

FOREWORD

The present Photo Hand Book is an illustrative account of the Munda tribe of Odisha with focus on their social, cultural, economic, religious and political reality. It is no doubt a sociological study of the tribe reflecting on the various facets of their existence and evolution. Their love for nature and natural surroundings, habitat and housing, community-based life and living, rites and rituals, religious faith, functions and festivals- all find general mention in this booklet. It can be termed as an intellectual effort backed by hard earned knowledge, wide study and documentation. It will no doubt provide an overall impression on Munda tribe of Odisha.

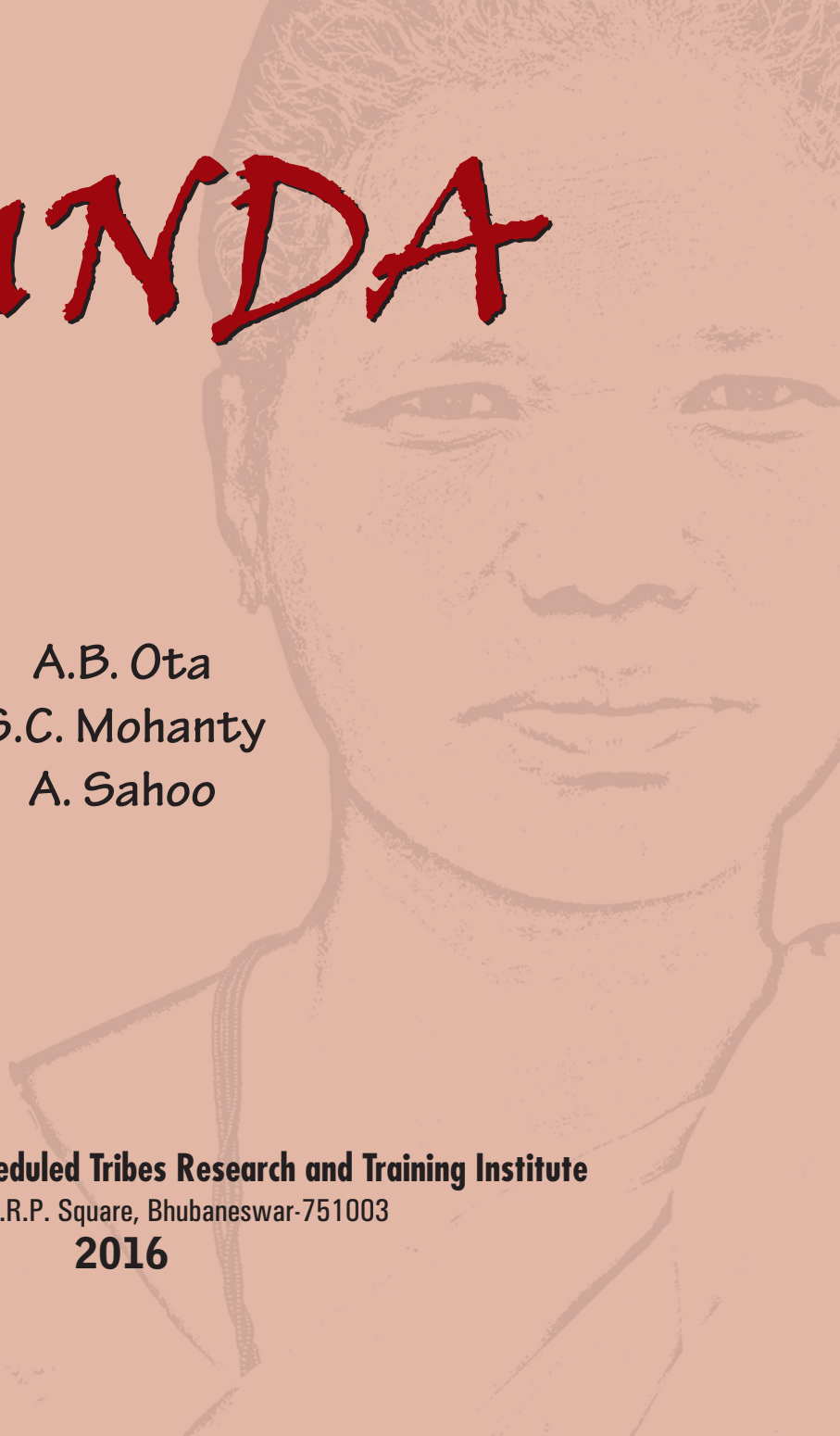
Munda as a tribe is a classic representative of the great Kolarian race. The Munda along with Munda Lohara, Munda Mahali, Nagabanshi Munda and Oriya Munda stands at serial 50 in the ST list of Odisha. They are dispersed in different districts of Odisha like Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj etc. having sub-sections like Santhali Munda, Nagpuria Munda, Kolhani Munda and Tamadia Munda. They are also known as Horo-Hon or Mura, meaning the 'head man' of a village. They consider themselves as the descendants of Singh Bonga, the Supreme Sun God. Mundari is their mother tongue which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family. They are multi-lingual and are well conversant in local languages like Odia and Sadri for inter group communication.

Now the Munda educated youths have become quite aware of their democratic rights, duties and responsibilities. They have accepted the Government's development initiatives rather positively. It is also true that their customary laws and traditional councils are still functional enough to resolve their customary disputes administering right justice in time.

This graphic documentation on the life style of Munda tribe is one among the "Series on Tribes of Odisha" published by SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar. Prof. (Dr) A. B. Ota, Director, Shri S.C. Mohanty, O.S.D. (Research) and Smt. Anjali Sahoo, S.A. of SCSTRTI have taken all the pains and every care in conceptualizing and compiling this multi-coloured booklet. I would like to thank them all for their earnest efforts. Shri S.C. Mohanty, O.S.D. deserves my special thanks for his engrossed involvement in the appraisal and editing of the handbook by addition of relevant data. Lastly, due credit must go to the labours of all others who have contributed even a little for this successful enterprise. I hope this book would be of enormous help as a ready reference for the tribal lovers and the tribal researchers alike.

Commissioner-cum-Secretary
ST & SC Development Department
Government of Odisha

MUNDA



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HISTORY & IDENTITY

Munda as a major tribe of Odisha is a classic representative of the great Kolarian race. The Munda along with Munda Lohara, Munda Mahali, Nagabanshi Munda and Oriya Munda finds place at the 50th Serial in the ST list of Odisha. According to Munda tribal tradition, they have migrated from the southern part of north India and entered Chhotnagpur plateau through modern Rohilakhand. Their ethnographic accounts indicate that they migrated to the eastern part of the country from central Asia in the pre-historic period. The long history of the Munda in their present habitat can be divided into four broad periods, (a) Primordial age in which the Munda were more or less isolated, (b) State formation and the onset of feudalism, (c) Colonial rule and (d) The post-independence period. They are now found in undivided Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Tripura along with Odisha.

In Odisha, Munda folktales say that their ancestors had originally lived in the Mundar Mountains. Several sections of Munda later on dispersed in different directions like Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj etc forming sub-sections like Santhali Munda, Nagpuria Munda, Kolhani Munda and Tamadia Munda. They are also known as Horo-Hon or Mura, meaning the village head man. They consider themselves as the descendants of Singh Bonga, the Supreme Sun God. Mundari is their mother tongue which belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family. They are multi-lingual and are well conversant in local languages like Odia and Sadri for inter group communication.

Population

Population/Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total	221399	222117	338936	396561	480252	558691
Male	110227	112107	170885	200389	242266	279211
Female	111172	110 010	168051	196172	237986	179480

Literacy Rate

Literacy Rate	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total	8.70	13.30	16.20	26.85	39.59	54.92
Male	14.26	19.65	24.15	38.64	51.56	64.66
Female	3.14	6.76	8.13	14.91	27.64	45.24

Sex Ratio (No of females per 1000 males)

Sex Ratio	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
	1009	981	983	979	982	1001

** Source: Census Reports and Profile of ST population in Orissa, SCSTRTI Publications*

Attire and Adornments

The attire of the Mundas is very simple, scanty and made of cotton. Their men ordinarily wear a loin cloth (*botoi*). On jovial occasions, young men and boys wear a longer *botoi*, two ends of which called condoles are allowed to hang gaily, before and behind, down to the feet. Young men also wear a sort of belt called *kardhani*. Very old men wear only a paltry piece of cloth about a yard long called *bagoa*. A small portion of the *bagoa* is allowed to hang in front. Besides loin cloth, the Mundas also use a piece of cloth as a wrapper for the upper part of their body. It is of two large and small varieties called *barkhi* and *pichowri*.

The Munda women generally put on a long piece of cloth (*paria*) round the waist, allowing a portion of it called paila to pass diagonally over the upper part of their body. Little girls wear shorter cloth (*khanria*), without the ornamental border of the *paria*. The old Munda men and women seldom use shoes. Wooden shoes (*katus*) are sometimes used. In rainy season, bamboo-umbrellas (*chatom)* and circular rain hats (*chakuri*) made of leaves of the gangu creeper are also used.

Young Munda women are keen on adorning their bodies with a large variety of brass ornaments. Ear rings (*tarkis*) made of silver or even of gold are occasionally used. Their ornaments include brass bracelets (*sakom*), lac bracelets (*lahti*), brass armlets (*tar*), Glass armlets (*churla*), brass necklace (*hasuli*), brass anklets(andu), finger rings (mudams), toe rings (*polas and jhutias*) etc. Young Munda women use a kind of hairpin made of iron or brass called *khongso* to hold together their bunch of black hair which is tied of in a knot or chignon with twists of false hair (*nacha*) at the back of the head. Necklace or *hisirs* made variously of coral (*tiji hisir*), of kasi grass (*kare hisir*), of birne reed (*sirum hisir*) and of glass beads (*munga hisir*) are also worn by young women.

This penchant of personal adornments is to some extent shared by young men as well. The Munda young men and women are very fond of flowers. Garlands of flowers in the form of necklace (*baha hisir*) are also worn by them. The Mundas also like to tattoo their girls by way of ornamentation. A girl at the age of eight or nine years has her forehead prickled over with a needle, three parallel lines of prickling made and into these a kind of black vegetable dye is injected. The back, the arms, the hands and the feet are likewise tattooed. The process of tattooing is called *sanga*.

HABITAT SETTLEMENT & HOUSING

The rolling pictorial landscape is home to the tribal communities of Odisha. The Mundas are generally positioned in a habitat with spotted milieu. The splendour of their habitat inside the forest-clad hills is well marked for its incredible topographical outskirts. The Munda settlements are generally heterogeneous. They solely settle in separate wards maintaining safe social distance from other ethnic groups, keeping their own self-identity intact. The Munda settlements are found to be amalgamated together without any methodical arrangement. A thin road finds its zigzag way in and out of the village settlement. They generally prefer to reside near the foot hill area where murmuring music of the perennial hill streams are heard, where life drops i.e. drinking water is easily accessed.

Housing

Normally the Mundas own spacious houses. The residence of a well-off Munda family consists usually of three or four houses with a courtyard called *racha* in the middle and a compound called *bakri* at the back. The majority of Munda houses are made up of at least two huts. Of these one is called *giti-ora* (sleeping house) and the other is *mandi-ora* (eating house). The giti ora includes the *merom-ora* (goat-shed) while the *mandi-ora* includes the ading (sacred niche) where the spirits of departed ancestors are worshipped. Ading is separated from the *sare* or the rest of the *mandi-ora* by a low mud wall of about three feet high. A portion of the sare is recognized as the *Ju-a-la* (kitchen) in to which no man of other castes is allowed to enter. Well-to-do Mundas have *oaris* (verandahs) on one or all sides of the main house. These *oaris* are often enclosed entirely or partially with low mud-walls and are utilized sometimes as extra resting rooms.

The Munda houses are supported by wooden posts and have often tiled roofs, but the poorer Mundas thatch their houses with a sort of grass called *saliri'* with fibre of a wild creeper. The houses generally have heavy wooden doors. Their floor usually remains high above the ground. Attached to every decent Munda house, there is a kitchen garden (*bakri piri*) in which maize (*jonhear*); chilli (*mirchi*), brinjals

(*toko*) pumpkin (*kakaru*) and other kitchen vegetables are grown. Every individual Munda has a compost pit (*sara-gare*) close to his home-stead to deposit cow dung, rotten vegetables and all kinds of waste materials to be used as manure in fields.

Household Articles

Utensils and Furniture

The household utensils and furniture used by the Mundas are neither various nor valuable. They have earthen pots (*chatu*), mud hearth (*chullahs*), bell metal cups (*dubris*) and dishes (*tharis, duvas*, and *chipnis*), stone plates and cups (*pathri*), wooden bowls (*katlas*), wooden spoons (*daru lundi*), earthen jars (*da chatu*) etc in their kitchen.

The Mundas often carry *tumba* or gourd vessels to fetch drinking water. Many types of bamboo baskets are used for storing household goods. Paddy is stored in *potoms*. A set of scales called *tula dandi* is kept in many well-to- do Munda houses. The lamp is made of a thin round wick placed in a small mud cap filled with oil. Brooms or *jonos* made of the *birni* grass are used by Munda women to sweep the floors. They have knives (*katu*) and meat cutters (*bainthi*). They use palm leaf mats as beds with a *ganda* (wooden or straw *pinri*) placed underneath the mat as pillows. Occasionally a piece of ragged cloth (*ledra lija*) is spread over the mat for comfort. They use *kamra* as blanket, *pichowri* or *barkhi* as wrappers in winter.

Agricultural, Musical and Other Implements

The Mundas are settled agriculturists and naturally keep a variety of agricultural implements at their disposal. They use a plough which consists of the wooden frame (*nayal*), an iron plough share (*pahal*) and a yoke. They employ harrow (*argom*), long earth mover (*karha*) made of wood and driven by cattle, hoe (kulam) and occasionally the crowbar (*sorobo*) with which stony soil is loosened. Sickle (*datrom*) is used for reaping crops and a sort of sling (*dhelkhusi*) is used in field watching. Three different kinds of husking instruments used by the Mundas are *darusehel* or wooden mortar, *dirisehel* or stone mortar and the ordinary wooden *dhenki*. The standard Mundari name for a net is *jalom*. The Mundas use a push-net (*pilni*), a drag net (*charguria*), a small circular prodding fish net (*gira*) and two kinds of bamboo fishing traps called janjid and kumni. Bow and arrow (*a-sar*), battle axe (*kapi*) and the spear (*balam*) are principally used in hunting. The shield (*phiri*) and two kinds of swords namely *khanda* and *tarwari* are now used only at *paiki* dances in marriage festivals. They hold small pincers (*chimta*) for extracting thorns from legs in forest pathways.

The Mundas are fond of music and use a gamut of musical instruments. The *dholki* (a small drum) and the *nagera* (a large drum) are quite popular among them. The name of other musical instruments used by Mundas are *dumang* (a kind of drum), *dhanpla* (*tambourine*), *karetal* (a *cymbal*), *saranga* (made of wood and goat skin with strings of horse tail), *murli* (small flute) etc. On occasions like *paiki* dances, young Munda men love to wear ankle bells called *ghugura*.

SOCIAL PANORAMA

Social Structure

Family

The tribal families are basically of two types: matriarchal and patriarchal. Most of the tribes of Odisha including Munda are patriarchal. Family is the central and dominating unit of their social organization being mostly *patri-lineal* and *patri-local*. Besides the nuclear family which is very common in their society, vertically extended families and joint families are also found in few cases.

Clan

The tribe Munda is divided into 2 sub-groups- *Kompat* and *Khangar* and a number of exogamous clans, known as *kili /gotra*. In Odisha, they have 24 clans which regulate their marriage alliances. In clan hierarchy, the Barla clan enjoys the peak position while *Topno, Horo, Kerketta*, and *Aind* clans occupy inferior positions in that order. The Mundas are aware of the social hierarchy and place themselves in the upper caste echelon. Acceptance of food and drink is maintained as per their customary rule. They don't accept water and cooked food from the lower castes like *Lohra* and *Ghasi*.

Social Fabric

Descent and inheritance

With regard to descent and inheritance, the father is regarded as the head of family. Women have special rights over their ornaments. The partition of a family property follows the rule of equigeniture but the eldest son is entitled to have a little extra. The widow of the deceased, if not remarried, may hold a share for her maintenance till death only. In families having no male successor, the daughters inherit the paternal property. An issueless family may adopt a male child from the nearest lineages who later on inherits the property.

Status of Women

Tribal attitudes in most communities including Munda are tolerant towards their women. The Mundas have an age old tradition of revering the Mother Goddess. They have maintained one of the better sex ratios in the state. They welcome girl child and female infanticide is unknown in their society. Girls are not regarded as burden to their family. They have a unique system where men have to pay bride price to the girls' family. Divorces and remarriages by women are not undervalued and they are easily accepted back by their maternal relations. The women contribute substantially to family income and besides their household chores, they participate in cultivation, forest collection and wage earning. They also play important role in rituals and social functions.

Games and Sports

A wide range of games are found to be very popular among the Munda young mass. Their boys have created superb hockey teams and are further developing their national games and sports. The games of Mundas may be roughly divided into three classes, namely (1) Athletics like *podi, khati* (2) Popular juvenile pastimes like *chhur, til- guti, kouri- inu, dundu- khel, bhoura- inu, uku- inu* (3) Dramatic Games like *Kantar – inu, didi- inu* etc.

Health Care System

In place of merely treating with medicines, tribal health care system believes in a holistic approach to health. The tribal groups of Odisha including Munda treat the mind, body and soul of a patient simultaneously with combination of herbal medicines, prayers, sacrifices and good health care practices. They prefer to do daily physical labour which act as exercise for their brain and muscles. The Munda traditional healers conduct deliveries and treat common ailments very effectively by using local herbs. Their traditional knowledge of nutrition is also fair and balanced. They use only herbal fertilizers and pesticides instead of chemical preparations to cultivate crops and preserve their seeds and grains.

LIFE CHAIN

Pregnancy, Child Birth and Post-Birth Rituals

The first pregnancy is a matter of great excitement in a Munda family. Although a pregnant woman does her routine work as usual she is not allowed to eat flesh of sacrificial animal or sleep in isolated room. She is tabooed to go out during solar or lunar eclipse. Even she is forbidden to go to the burial ground or touch the corpse.

Delivery takes place at home assisted by a dai (mid-wife) of *Ghasi* or *Lohara* community. The Birth of a child is usually prearranged in a separate confined lying-in-room enclosed near the rear verandah. After delivery, *chhut* (pollution) is continued for six to nine days until the dried up umbilical cord is detached from the baby. Then *chhatiari* or *chhati* rite is performed for purification. On that day *mundan* (tonsure rite) of the baby is also done. Namakaran (Name giving Ceremony) is done either on the day of *chhati* or on the next day by *aja* or *aji* (Grand parents). A baby is given two names, one of an ancestor by which the child is not called, the other is for addressing the child. The second name is given according to the day or month of the date of birth of the baby. From the next day after *chhati*, mother of the new born baby is allowed to cook food. On that day, she enters in to the ora *bhitar* and her husband sacrifices a coloured chicken and offers its blood to the ancestors. She cooks it and then she is allowed to cook for the family and ancestors.

One of the most important rituals for child is *kanbadhi* or *lutur tukai* (piercing of earlobe). It is performed when a child is 2 or 3 years old. It is generally done by the child's maternal uncle on *Makar Sankranti* or the day following it. *Muhjutti* (the first rice feeding) of a girl child is done in the fifth month and that of a male child, in the sixth month. Every child grows with warm affection and wary attention in a Munda family.

Puberty Rites

The puberty rite for adolescent girl on attaining her first menarche is observed. The girl remains isolated in a secluded room for a period of seven days. Within the pollution period the girl is tabooed to look or be looked at by any male person. On the dawn of the eighth day, she takes the cleansing bath in the nearby hill stream by anointing with turmeric paste and mustard oil. Then she wears new garments presented by her family and returns home accompanied by her mother. On reaching home she is offered with new attire and cosmetics by her maternal relatives. In the evening her family hosts a non-vegetarian feast to guests, kith and kin.

Youth Organisations & Other Social Institutions

The Mundas have a system of maintaining youth dormitory (*giti ora*) for both boys and girls separately. It serves as a socio-cultural platform for moral and social schooling of the young people of the community. After their evening meals, the young bachelors and maidens gather in their respective *giti oras*. Various types of riddles (*nutum-kahani*) are propounded and unlocked, folk-tales (*kaji-kahani*) and fables are narrated and remembered and songs are sung and learnt there until bed-time. *Giti oras* continue as institutions of vital weight in the socio-cultural life of the Munda community.

Besides these dormitories, the other traditional social institutions found in the Munda villages are the *sarna* (sacred groves), the *akhra* and the *sasan*.

Marriage

The Munda practise tribe endogamy and clan exogamy. Monogamy (*arandi*) is the common practice among them. Polygamy is found in exceptional cases. Marriage ceremony occupies a place of major prominence in a Munda life. They consider marriage arranged through negotiation as the prestigious means of acquiring a spouse. Other modes of acquiring mates are marriage by mutual consent, by elopement, by service, by intrusion (*dhuku*), by exchange (*gua badal*), by application of vermilion on bride's head in a public place (*sindurkarna*) etc. With rare exceptions, their marriages tend to occur predominantly within the same generation. The whole of the nuptial cycle mainly goes through four phases like preliminary enquiries, ceremonial paying of bride price, ceremony proper and post nuptial ceremony. They pay *dali-taka* (bride price) both in cash and kind. The norm of dwelling after marriage is *patri-local*. Proposal for marriage is initiated by the bride groom's side through an *agua* (mediator) of their own community. Marriage is solemnized at the bride's house and the rituals are performed by a *pahan* (priest) and sometimes by a gossain. *Sindur* (vermilion) mark and *meren sakam* (an iron bangle worn on left arm) are the symbols of a married woman.

Remarriage (*sangai* or *sagai*) is also allowed in rare cases where the first wife is found to be a barren, mentally retarded or suffering from infectious diseases. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees as well as junior *levirate* and junior *sororate* are also permitted in their society.

Divorce

In Munda society, either party can divorce his/her spouse on the ground of misunderstanding in marital life, maladjustment, brutality, contagious diseases, poor maintenance, extra marital relationship and barrenness etc. When an issue of divorce emerges, a Panchayat is convened, attended by members from both the parties. The president of the council hands over a sal leaf to the offending party and the later tears the leaf as an indication of the breaking of the marriage. This ceremony is known as *sakam-chari* or *chutta chhutti*. The *lachar* (offender) has to pay a fine to the *Panchayat*. Children of a divorced couple are the sole liability of their father.

Death

The Mundas believe that death is inevitable. Their orthodox method of disposal of a corpse is to burn and to collect the bones which are ceremonially interred in the family *sasan* on the annual *jangtopa* (bone burying day) day. However at present they bury their dead. When a person dies he is carried to the burial ground and is laid facing north. Then the youngest son (in his absence, the eldest son) takes a new piece of cloth and makes two halves of it. Then one half is tied with a stem of bel tree and fire is set. The son holding it encircles the dead body thrice and throws it in north direction. Then he keeps handful of soil on the corpse thrice. Other persons attending the funeral also keep soil on the dead body. Post death *chhut* (pollution) continues up to nine days. On the 10th day death rituals are performed by the *Pahan* (priest) of their community.

During the pollution period, the bereaved family members take vegetarian food. Calling *mua* (soul of the deceased person having natural death) is one of their important rituals. *Mua* is invited and offered a place of permanence in the ora *bhitar*. But he who dies unnaturally is believed to become an evil spirit. The Munda groups belonging to distinct clans have separate burial grounds called *sasan* in the village. The burial stone, *sasan diri*, is erected in the clan *sasan* in memory of the deceased.

ECONOMIC EDIFICE

Agriculture, MFP and others

Tribal economy revolves around easy tools, scanty amount of funds and limited raw materials. Plain division of labour is the general rule in their society. Munda economy mostly relies on land and forest. They do not emphasize on organized efforts for formation of capital, increase of savings etc. Agriculture continues to be the principal activity of the Munda. They are settled agriculturists. They grow rice, pulses, tobacco etc. Rice is grown on don as well as on *donr* land. Upland rice is reaped in August and September and includes several varieties of coarse rice only. The upland crops are generally sown by rotation. There are two processes for the cultivation of low-land paddy, viz. the *buna* or sowing and the *ropa* or transplantation, followed by weeding, watching, threshing and harvesting. They also produce many kitchen vegetables in their *bakri piri* (kitchen garden).

They generally gather Minor Forest Produce (MFP) from thick forests along with a variety of seasonal edible roots, fruits, tubers, flowers, leaves, mushrooms, honey etc. As subsidiary occupation they rely on livestock rearing, carpentry and bamboo basketry. Munda women contribute substantially in cultivation and wage earning in addition to their household chores. Many of the Mundas also serve as skilled and unskilled workers in both Government and private sectors. The growth of industry in Sundargarh district and its surrounding regions has opened up new economic opportunities for the Munda community.

Role of Tribal *Haats*

Tribal *haats* are regarded as the backbone of tribal economy. These are temporary weekly markets organized at regular intervals in designated places where the Munda people gather with their goods from their remote uphill settlements.

Fishing, hunting and agricultural equipments along with food items and artful handicrafts, unique handmade earthen, metallic and wooden utensils and other products are easily available in these *haats*. The Mundas also take their materials collected from the jungle to these *haats* and sometimes exchange them for *bulum* (salt). Apart from selling their surplus produce and buying their necessities from the market, the Mundas get an opportunity for social interaction with their friends and relatives in this place.

Food and Drinks

Food security for a Munda household relies basically on soil, wood and nature. The Mundas are non-vegetarians. Fowls and goats are reared for food purpose. But they normally do not eat pork or beef. Boiled rice is their staple food. Occasionally instead of rice, they consume wheat, maize or *marua*. Among the pulses, *biri, kandul*, *moong* etc. are habitually eaten. They also include various types of edible jungle roots, fruits, tubers, mushrooms etc in their daily food chart. Among the vegetables, they eat onions, brinjals, tomatoes, pumpkins, gourds, lady's fingers, beans etc. The corolla of the flowers like *mahua* is also consumed as food. They eat three times in a day- the *loari* or morning meal, the *tikin mandi* or mid-day meal, and the *ayub mandi* or evening meal. They cook curries and cakes using soris (mustard) or *surguja* (*Niger*) oil and eat salt with food. For condiments *haldi* (turmeric) and chilies are commonly used.

The favourite drink of the Mundas is rice bear or ili. Each family prepares its own ili. Besides they drink *mahua* liquor in festive occasions. Some Mundas use powdered tobacco rolled up in *saal* leaves in the form of cigarettes while some others use tobacco with lime. The Munda men drink almost regularly, women also drink but occasionally.

MAGICO-RELIGIOUS BELIEFS & PRACTICES

Animism and Supernaturalism:

The indigenous religion of the tribal groups in India is commonly characterized as “animistic”. Animism is the dogma that inanimate objects as well as living beings like mountains, rocks, rivers, trees etc are believed to be inhabited by deities and spirits.

The Mundas strongly believe in deities and spirits and their relationship with supernaturalism are founded on respectful fear, dependence, self surrender and propitiation. Their spiritual union with these spirits is supposed to be accomplished concretely through supplications, rice beer offerings and animal sacrifices. The medium of contact between super natural powers and the Munda are considered to be the magico-religious functionaries known as the *Pahan* and the *Sokha*.

Religious Faith, Functions and Festivals:

Munda religion centers round the relationship between festivals and their annual agricultural cycle. The key festivals of the Mundas are *Sarhul*, *Karma, Fagu, Sosobonga, Deothan, Mage, Hon-Ba, Batauli, Dasai, Kalam Singh Bonga, Jom Nawa, Ind Parab* and *Sohrai*. They also observe Hindu festivals like *Ramnavami*, *Dussehra*, *Dipavali* and *Shivaratri*. All the festivals are associated with definite periods of the year and are celebrated accordingly. These occasions and events intensify the emotional and cultural appeal of Munda religion.

Leaving aside the Christian Mundas, the rest have their noticeable affinity with Hindu religion. Their ancestors are regarded as their family deities. They have added a number of popular Hindu deities into their own pantheon. Their birth, marriage and funeral ceremonies have a unique feature of pseudo-religious implications. They are also worshippers of nature. They revere mountain as *Bonga Buru*, sun as *Sim Bonga*, water as *Ikri Bonga* and jungle as *Bir Bonga* in their legacy. Banjhari Maa is adored as the mother of their jungle. They have faith in both benevolent and malevolent deities. Among the malevolent deities, ghost, *Dakin* is extremely familiar.

Christianity has played a pivotal role in the social transformation of the Mundas. It helps in enlarging their horizon of consciousness significantly.

Birsa Dharam

The last years of the 19th century registered the growth of an eclectic religion amongst the Mundas. *Birsa Munda* was the founder and the prophet of this religion which was a mixture of

Hinduism and Christianity. The perpetual dogma of this *dharam* relies in one God, i.e. Birsa as the incarnation of God on earth. It also emphasizes on purity of character and transparency of soul. The followers of this dharam are small in number, known as "*Birsait Munda*" and observe certain taboos of their own. It was more like a socio-religious movement against oppression among the *Kompat Mundas*.

SOCIAL CONTROL

The Mundas have their own *Jati Panchayat* for enforcing social control. It is called Jati Pancho in the village level, headed by a *Marua*, often called *Sabhhapati*. The *Sabhapati* of each Pancho is a member of *Parha Pancho* – the regional council headed by a *Raja* (*head man*). The Raja is elected from amongst the representatives of all constituent *Panchos*. In case of failure to solve disputes in *Jati Pancho*, the head man forwards the case to the *Parha Pancho*. Their traditional Panchayat is regarded as the guardian of their norms and traditions. It adjudicates cases relating to family matters, theft, rape, molestation, extra-marital relationship, illicit pregnancy, divorce, violation of customary laws etc and can impose fine to the offenders both in cash and kind. It is also empowered to outcast a family from the society on judging the graveness of the offence, the accused has committed. All the office bearers of their *Jati Panchayat* are highly revered in their society. Women don't have any representation in their *Jati Panchayat*.

The Munda people had evolved this polity suited to their needs since a long time. They however did not have absolute power but went by consensus expressed at *Panchayat* meetings. From time to time they have introduced changes in their form and functions to meet the modern challenges. Presently Ward Members, *Sarapanchs* and Chairman of *Panchayat Samiti* take care of the development activities initiated in their locality. The Mundas also take part in political affairs of the nation including general elections for *Loksabha* and *Vidhansabha*.

SIGNS AND SCENES OF CHANGE

With the dawn of independence, the wind of change is blowing in the interior tribal pockets as well. The Munda people are now passing through a phase of transition. With the development of science and infrastructure, industrialization exerts profound impact on the various aspects of Munda society. With the emergence of Government offices in strategic places, land has come to be used for markets, churches, temples and educational institutions. With the spread of education, Munda young people have entered into the field of industrial economy and job market. With the change of political system the traditional roles of the functionaries have also changed. The importance of tribal religion in Munda life has also altered patently due to conversion to Christianity. Still their silent but solid grip on their core of the world continues unabated.

Scenes of change in the Munda habitation can be traced in the growing welfare institutions like Government Residential Schools, Colleges, *Anganwadi* Centres, Public Health Centres, Veterinary Hospitals, Police Posts and Industrial Establishments etc. We also find all weather roads, tube wells, IAY houses, fire proof houses, electrified villages and irrigated green fields in the Munda settlement area. Even supply of HYV seeds, introduction of multiple cropping, input assistance, market assurance, banking linkages etc have strengthened their foothold in agriculture. *MGNREGA* programme also plays a vital role in upholding their economy. Blooming execution of various individual benefit schemes and Bankable Income Generating Schemes for women SHGs by the Government illustrate the positive angle of their development. Organization of Live Demonstration Programmes of Arts and Craft of different tribes, Tribal Dance Festivals and *Adivasi Mela* by the Government from time to time undoubtedly provides a polite platform for the tribals to bloom and flourish in their own way. Implementation of PESA Rule in the tribal belts of Odisha also registers encouraging results.

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Photo Handbook on Tribes of Odisha, Series : 42, Munda
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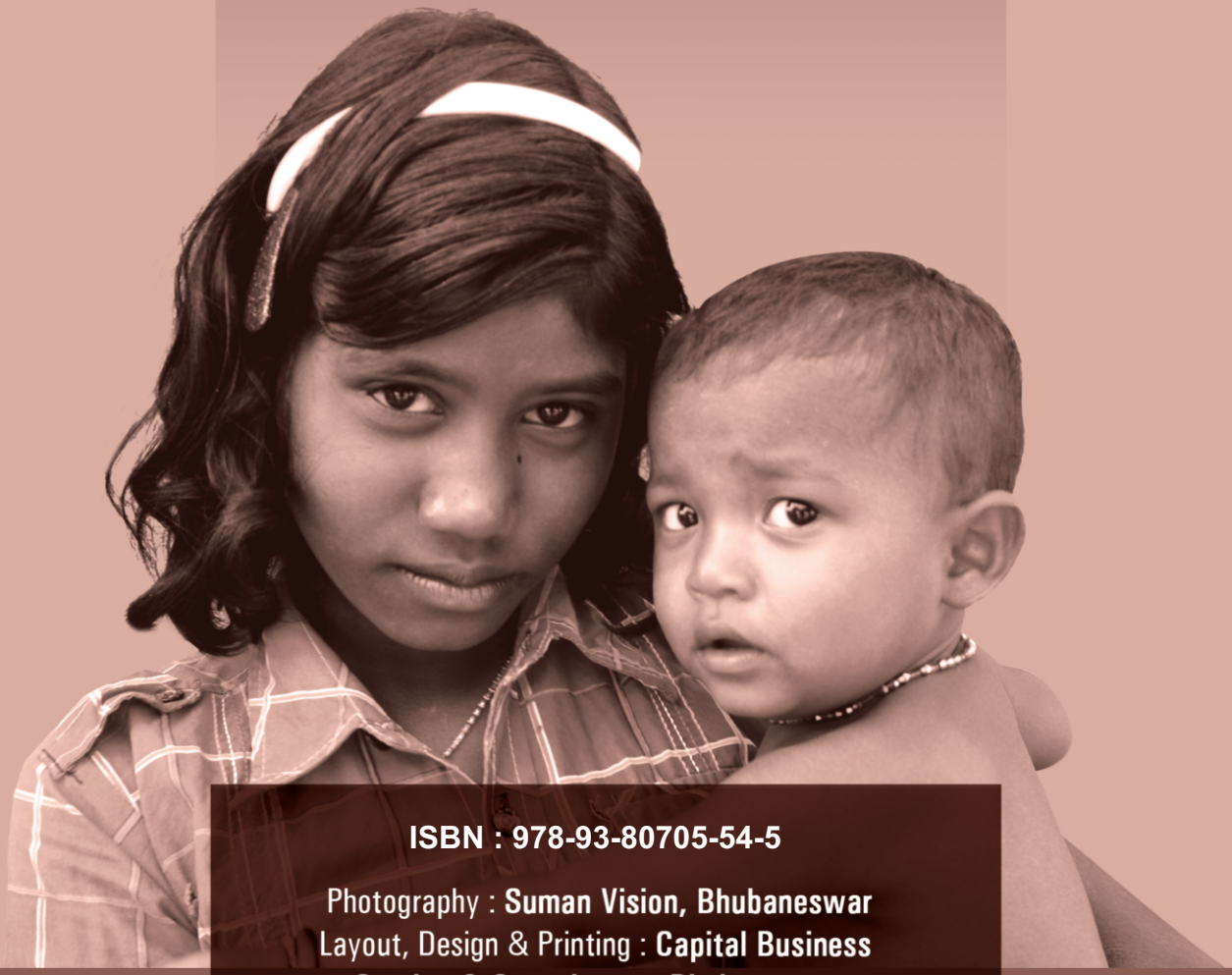

ISBN : 978-93-80705-54-5

Photography : **Suman Vision, Bhubaneswar**
Layout, Design & Printing : **Capital Business Service & Consultancy, Bhubaneswar**